

WASHINGTON, DC (June 7, 2012) – Today, Reps. Jan Schakowsky (D-IL), Nita Lowey (D-NY), Howard Berman (D-CA) and about 37 House colleagues introduced H.R. 5905, the International Violence Against Women Act, to establish new tools to help the U.S. government prevent violence against women abroad, particularly in conflict situations.

“This bill is not only the right thing to do—but the smart thing to do. Combating violence against women is a critical step toward promoting regional and global stability,” said Rep. Schakowsky. “Too many dismiss violence against women as just a women’s issue. *Violence against women is a global health catastrophe, a social and economic impediment, and a threat to national security.*” Women’s rights are human rights, and all women deserve to live a life free from violence, intimidation, and fear.”

It has been estimated that nearly a billion women globally will be beaten, raped, mutilated or otherwise abused during their lifetimes—that is 1 in 3 women. In some countries up to 70% of women and girls are affected by violence. In countries with armed conflict, rape has been used as a weapon of war to intimidate and destabilize entire communities.

The International Violence Against Women Act (IVAWA) would create a comprehensive, 5-year strategy to combat violence against women and girls abroad. It would give the U.S. State Department new tools ranging from health programs and survivor services to legal reforms in order to promote economic opportunities and education for women. IVAWA would also increase humanitarian funding and update mechanisms for responding to emergency outbreaks of violence against women and girls abroad.

IVAWA would ensure that assistance provided for humanitarian relief and conflict mitigation includes preventing and responding to violence against women and girls, building capacity of local partners to address women’s special protection needs, and providing support services

including education, medical care, trauma counseling, economic opportunity, and legal services. The legislation also incorporates education on preventing and responding to violence against women into ongoing U.S. training of foreign military forces, police forces, and judicial officials. A broad coalition of diverse organizations support its passage, including domestic and international women's NGOs, humanitarian groups, faith-based organizations and U.N. agencies. □

*“Violence against women knows no borders, nor class, race, ethnicity, or religion,”* said **Rep. Schakowsky**

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*Women in conflict zones face a particularly desperate situation because of the use of rape and sexual violence against women as a weapon of war. This legislation asks our government to integrate prevention of violence against women into every aspect of our diplomatic and development policy.*

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**Rep. Nita Lowey:** “Violence against women happens in every nation, every day, and we are here today to say no more,” said Rep. Lowey. “Violence inhibits a woman’s chance to live a healthy, safe, and productive life, and the ripple effects of this violence impact all parts of society. We must pass IVAWA to work at individual, family, community, national, and international levels to take real and meaningful steps toward protecting women worldwide, reducing poverty, and promoting economic development and stability.”

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**Rep. Rosa DeLauro:** “Violence against women—whether it is mass rape in conflict zones, like the Congo, domestic violence, or honor killings—is an abomination. More than just a moral outrage, it is a human rights violation, a public health epidemic, a barrier to solving global challenges such as hunger, poverty and AIDS, and a threat to national security. This bill will

help address these issues by coordinating our international efforts to combat violence against women. It is time we awoke to the paramount moral challenge of our time, and give the State Department the tools to stem violence against women around the world, and increase their empowerment. In terms of fostering development, increasing our national security, and heeding our basic morality, this is an investment we have to make.”

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